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ABSTRACT

Objectives and components of British Columbia's Year 2000 program are described in this paper. Purposes of the program are to develop educated citizens and a learner-focused system. The curriculum acknowledges the many influences on learning and the multifaceted spheres of literacy. The restructuring of basic programs--primary (K-3), intermediate (4-10), and graduation (the remaining years)--is described. Some program characteristics include continuous learning, a focus on learning outcomes, development of a learner profile, and parent communication. Two figures are included. (LMI)

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YEAR 2000 REFORMS--DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION--The B.C. CASE

PRESENTATION

International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement

Victoria, B.C.

January 3 & 4, 1992

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PRESENTATION

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INTRODUCTION

1. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The 1980's saw considerable public debate and discussion everywhere in the Western world about the appropriate purpose, goals, and structure of public educational programs. In our Province, the discussion prompted major studies and reports by Ministers of Education in 1980 and in 1985.

Extensive public consultation suggested the need to increase school effectiveness, and to develop a more cooperative and collaborative approach to schooling, with strengthened school-community relations. Concern was expressed by the public about quality and they indicated programs could be improved if greater individual attention was paid to the needs of youngsters. Funding, standards, teacher professionalism, diversity and choice, and technology were all identified as issues.

In response to wide-spread public concern, the Provincial Government named a Royal Commission to examine all issues and to make recommendations for the consideration of the government.

The Royal Commission on Education of 1988 in B.C. (called the Sullivan Royal Commission after Barry Sullivan who headed it) made 83 substantive recommendations as to how our educational system could be improved.

Its report called a Legacy for Learners, indicated the need to refocus our education system on the learner. In concert with institutional analysts everywhere, the Commission clearly indicated that our system had to refocus on the needs of its clients (students and parents). Mandates and goals needed to be clarified.

In response, and to the surprise of many, the provincial government accepted almost all of the recommendations. Working from the basis established by the Royal Commission, government documents issued new policy directions, a mission statement for education, new mandates for all parts of the system, a definition of the educated citizen (an ideal that students should be helped toward achieving), and directions for the improvement of all of our programs.

In addition, government committed $1.4 billion in operating funds over 10 years as an addition to regular budgets (about 5%) and $1.5 billion in additional capital funds over 6 years to help fund the changes.

2.

What are the conditions in our society that are causing us to consider educational change so seriously?

- Millions of jobs will open up in our country over the next fifteen years and we will need to give guidance to our students in their choice of career training. In 1960, 80% of the jobs in our country were related to industrial activity. In 1988, only 40% of the jobs related to industry, and, the Canadian projection says, by the year 2000, only six percent. Ninety percent of the economy will be dominated by service workers and half of those workers will be involved in collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, structuring, storing and retrieving information.

- Look at the projection of "The Changing Canadian occupational structure from 1986 to 2000" from Statistics Canada shows that of the new jobs to be created over this period, most will require post-secondary education.

It will no longer be sufficient to train our leaders well through extensive post-secondary education. We will require virtually <u>every</u> student to graduate successfully from secondary school, and most to succeed, not only in post-secondary training but as life-long learners. We cannot continue to accept non-completion rates of up to 30%.

The Harvard Business Review says that business requires employees that look like this:

Harvard Business Review

- willingness to learn
- excellent reading, writing, and computation
- creative thinker, problem-solver
- strong communication
- independent decision maker

- high self-esteem, self-motivation
- work collectively, collaboratively

If we take this seriously, we must produce students who can become such employees very quickly, once entering the work force. We accept that school must address all of the characteristics on this slide, not just the second one.

3. How We Began

We began our program development work by developing a consensus around a mission statement for education in B.C. Here it is.

The purpose of the British Columbia School System is to **enable learners** to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.

We then moved to create our definition of the Educated Citizen. (It was interesting to us that after we had one, Peter Drucker in his book the New Realities, called for such a statement to be developed in the United States, as a vital pre-cursor to shaping educational reform efforts.) Our statement reads:

Educated Citizen

- Thoughtful, able to learn critically, and to communicate information from a broad knowledge base;
- creative, flexible, self-motivated with a positive self image;
- skilled, able to contribute to society, and the world of work;
- productive, gains satisfaction through achievement, strives for physical well-being;
- cooperative, principled, and respectful of others;
- aware of individual's rights and responsibilities within the family, the community, and the world.

4. Goals

We also established a set of goals for our system which are probably identical to those of systems everywhere.

- intellectual development-prime goal of schooling
- other goals - shared with the family and the community

Note: The Mission Statement, the educated citizen ideal, and the Goals of Public schools all received official government sanction in the Policy Directions document.

5. CENTRAL IDEA OF OUR PROGRAM

- Research on learning is unequivocal on three main principles:

Learning and the Learner

1. Learning requires the active participation of the learner.

2. People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.

3. Learning is both an individual and social process.

Our professional experience confirms that these principles are well-founded. Our common sense and our knowledge of people, including ourselves, shows the truth of these statements.

If we accept these as true, why have we organized schools and instructional programs in ways so as to ignore them? Have the pressures of expediency, economy, utility, or organizational simplicity caused us to lose sight of what we know about the central process of education - that is - fostering learning, the process which is the whole reason for our existence?

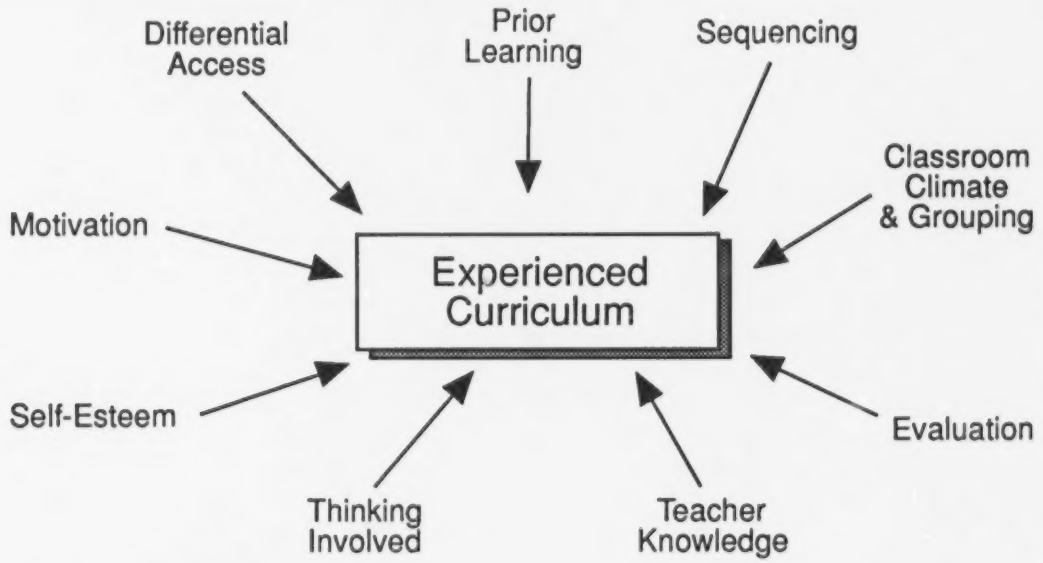
Examining our current practices against these principles has led us to devise some bold and innovative approaches to improving our schools. Each day as we work to improve our system we are challenged by these principles and are engaged in constant debate and reevaluation of their implications.

The last two principles established the focus for curriculum and assessment. We acknowledge that systems assessment is critical to maintaining public confidence and support in our work and we are not ignoring it. However, in a learner focussed system, its prime purpose must be to help students learn.

6. CURRICULUM

Ideas about curriculum are changing. We used to believe that we could issue a prescribed curriculum and affect directly what happens in every classroom in B.C. We now know that this intended curriculum is, in reality, only one resource in the hands of classroom teachers, and that the curriculum experienced by the learner is quite different. Consider the model developed from remarks of Dr. Philip Gamage, of Nottingham University.

This model identifies the influences on what learners actually learn. Traditional curriculum may deal with sequencing, teacher knowledge, and perhaps promote thinking. The other influences are not necessarily directly impacted by prescribed curriculum (except for the possible negative motivation of failing to cover the prescribed content).



7. LEARNING DIMENSIONS

Therefore we are working to reframe our curriculum efforts toward the knowledge, skills and attitudes we believe are essential to help create educated citizens. These form part of the framework for all 13 years of schooling and will be inherent in our work of developing specific learning outcomes and evaluation processes. While subjects and content will still be addressed, the linkage of subjects and content to this framework will, over time, be made explicit.

We are also having a considerable debate both publicly and within education circles on the issue of literacy, and whether or not the system is dealing with it adequately. Compounding the complexity are the realities of social and

demographic change. Consider, for example, the framework for literacy developed by Dr. Bill Spady, of outcomes-based education fame.

Spheres of Literacy

	Technological	Global	Civic	Cultural	Personal
Verbal					
Quantitative					
Technical					
Strategic					
Social					
Evaluative					

Is this vision of literacy what the debate is about? Should it be? We believe that our focus on knowledge, skills, and attitudes leads itself to the development of such a literacy framework.

8. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Based on these elements of the framework we are redesigning our basic programs in Primary (K-3), Intermediate (currently 4-10 with possible change to 8 or 9), and Graduation (the remaining years). The bridging of the Intermediate program between traditional elementary and secondary schools is deliberate. We believe that a significant cause of the drop-out rate and general disaffection with learning is caused by the loss of learner-focus at about Grade 8 (age 13 or 14) at the very time when students' bodies are exploding, emotions are confused, self-image is at is lowest. Just at this time, our present system traditionally throws kids on their own to sink or swim educationally.

9. PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS (SOME OF THEM)

- Continuous Learning - not eliminating failure - We recognize that trial & error is still a legitimate feature of learning, but major failure such as grade failure is too traumatic. Research tells us that children consider grade failure as their most serious concern, after losing a parent, or going blind. We do not believe that a climate of fear is condusive to the development of educated citizens. Addressing significant challenges and overcoming them, with effort, is.

  Quoting from an article by Lorrie A. Shepard and Mary Lee Smith in Educational Leadership (May, 1990) entitled "Synthesis of Research on Grade Retention":

- *"Grade failure rates are as high as they were in the 19th century, before the days of social promotion. Although annual statistics show only about a 6 percent annual rate for retention, year after year that produces a cumulative rate of non-promotion greater than 50 percent. By 9th grade approximately half of all students in the U.S. have flunked at least one grade (or are no longer in school).*

- *Retained children actually perform more poorly on average when they go on to the next grade than if they had been promoted without repeating a grade.*

- *Dropouts are five times more likely to have repeated a grade than are high school graduates. Students who repeat two grades have a probability of dropping out of nearly 100 percent."*

- Focus on Learning Outcomes - Our intention is to free classroom professionals to make decisions about specific content to be covered, specific resources to be used. Assessment, both in classrooms for purposes of assisting individual learners, and systems-wide for quality assurance, should focus on what learners can do, and what they need to learn to do next.

- Learner Profile - learning cannot be adequately documented by a series of cryptic numbers or symbols on a card. We must find efficient ways to collect samples of authentic indicators of performance and demonstrations of what students can do, in the context of a collection of reference sets showing the widely held expectations in our Province for student performance. That's a mouthful - a complex task that must be completed in order to provide an improved basis for judgements about learners and the tracking of their progress.

- Communicating with Parents - for years, parents have been tolerated as a benevolent nuisance by many of us. Now we clearly understand that parents are vital partners in the educational process and that, unless we can involve them in serious ways, our efforts to deal with the huge variety of social and educational issues which our students confront will not succeed. The lack of one or more concerned parents (or other adults) in a student's life is a major contributor to disillusionment and loss of interest in the learning effort. Therefore, we must communicate, in simple, ordinary language, our goals, our expectations, our processes, and our evaluations so that parents truly have all the information they need to play their part.

- Systems assurance in our Province is managed through Provincial Learning Assessment. In this program, each year we select one major area of learning (reading, mathematics, science, etc.), reexamine in cooperation

with classroom colleagues our expectations, sample broadly at ages 9, 13, and 16, and draw conclusions about how well programs are performing. Feedback to schools and districts guides their plans for improvement. In addition, all grade 12 students write at least one Grade 12 examination. Students bound for post-secondary institutions write several. Exam results are combined with teacher assessments to produce final marks, with the exam counting for 40% of the mark.

10. PRIMARY PROGRAM

This program covers the first four years of schooling (1 year or 1/2 days and 3 years of full days) and its initial development is now complete. The main features of the Primary Program are:

- Non-graded Curriculum - the curriculum is a set of challenging learning outcomes to be addressed in the first four years of schooling. It is not segregated into grades.

- Continuous Learning - learners progress through the program as they acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes in each area.

- Subjects and strands are integrated - the program encourages teachers to use techniques such as whole language, learning centres, small and large group work, etc. However, the instructional program must be organized in relation to the needs of students and be addressing the required learning outcomes. This is not a licence for teachers or students to "do their own thing".

- Authentic Assessment Practices - these include collecting students' work, frequent observation seeking achievement of the desired learning outcomes, creation of portfolios, student involvement in assessment, reporting and parent interviews.

- Professional Flexibility - The decisions about specific content, process, and resources rest firmly with classroom teachers.

- Flexible administrative arrangements - the program suggests grouping and re-grouping whenever it will improve the schools ability to meet learners' needs, with due regard to the need for bonding and secure relationships to adults. Schools are encouraged to be as flexible as they can be in arranging how students and teachers work together and to push against the constraints which surround them.

11. INTERMEDIATE PROGRAM

This program is still under discussion. It currently is described to cover the traditional Grades 4 to 10. Its main features include:

- Continuous Learning - grades, if they are used as devices for administrative convenience, will not necessarily be analogous to material being covered. Students are expected to proceed as quickly and expeditiously as they can toward the desired learning outcomes of the program. We hope that grade failure in this program will be eliminated.

- Active Learning - a wider variety of learning experiences will be encouraged so that students remain actively involved in the learning process

- Flexible Instructional Planning - classroom teachers are encouraged to use whatever instructional arrangements will best enable them to meet the needs of their students. Again, judgements about specifics will be made by teachers in consultation with students, not remote program planners. We will encourage integration of subject matter within strands and between strands, developing our curriculum guides and resource recommendations to support this approach.

- Authentic Assessment Practices - will be continued in this program, with a specific goal that every student comes to understand his or her strengths or weaknesses, and how they relate to program expectations in the subsequent Graduation Program and beyond. Toward the end of the program we hope to assist students to make more informed choices about their career aspirations and the challenges faced in achieving them.

- Broadly based, Liberal Program - all students will be expected to achieve learning outcomes in all four strand areas, Humanities, Sciences, Fine Arts, and Practical Arts.

- Language Learning - all students will be expected to spend several years working on a second language, (which for some may well be English).

- Adult Mentoring - every student should have an adult in the school community to whom he or she can turn for advice and support.

12. GRADUATION PROGRAM

This program, also under development, retains to a considerable degree the characteristics of the other two programs. However, it is clear that this program must heed closely societal expectations for our graduates - that is - must prepare them for life-long learning, for the world of work, and for

some, for entry into post-secondary programming. These expectations strongly affect the nature of our plans for this program.

Major characteristics of the program will be:

- School and District Mission Statements - linked to the provincial Mission statement, the description of the educated citizen, to the provincial goals.

- Inclusiveness - the program will not be designed to exclude anyone, but rather to provide all learners with the conditions and strategies that will maximize their opportunities to achieve a high level of success.

- Opportunities to Demonstrate Success - students will be expected to demonstrate success on unit outcomes (part of a course), course outcomes, and program outcomes, and they will receive credit toward graduation for all successful demonstrations.

- Continuous Learning - within reasonable limits students will advance at a pace appropriate to their needs, having more than one chance to demonstrate success, even after regular reporting periods have ended. Challenges can be tried again, until the student is satisfied that he or she has done the best job possible.

- Flexible Instructional Practice - a rich diversity of methods and strategies will be promoted, allowing teachers and students to select those most likely to work well, and encouraging all students to succeed.

- Changed Assessment, Performance Standards, Student Credentialling and Reporting - these will be tightly aligned with goals and outcomes, will encourage learners to achieve high performance levels, document what students can do whenever they are able to do it, will enable students to demonstrate and receive full credit for improved learning on a timely basis anytime prior to graduation, and will avoid insidious comparisons among students. We hope, for example, to use computer technology to allow students to take government exams on computer terminals at their convenience. Rewrites will be encouraged. Marks assigned may be "A", "B", and "not yet B". Such possibilities are, of course, still the subject of active debate and discussion in our Province.

- Personalized Learning Plan - to the maximum extent possible, we want schools to work with students to organize programs which are focussed on their specific educational and career aspirations. To graduate, each student will demonstrate that he or she has achieved the outcomes in a Personalized Learning Plan.

- Adult Mentoring - as described in the Intermediate Program.

- School-Community Involvement - we hope that school-community partnerships in program design and delivery become the norm. We are working toward extending pre-apprenticeship programs in secondary schools, advanced placement in post-secondary programs through joint school-college programs, business partnerships and work experience for all students.

- General Studies - an issue-based set of learning experiences (perhaps the equivalent of two courses) in which all students in heterogeneous groups tackle issues of concern to our country and the world at large. Elements from all four strands will be part of the program, and it will be provincially examinable. We believe this is essential to round out our efforts to create educated citizens.

13. CONCLUSION

This is our vision - our hope for our Year 2000 Program. We have given ourselves until 1999 to clarify the vision, develop the programs, implement them, assess and revise them, as necessary, and complete our program of change. With the cooperation and energy of our stakeholder partners - teachers, parents, school administrators, district officials, trustees, business, labour, and special interest groups we intend to succeed.

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